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MBK-0004

4 February 1981

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director, FBIS

THROUGH : Chief, Operations Group

SUBJECT : Monthly Report--Bangkok Bureau--January 1981

I. GENERAL

It did not take long for the prediction in the December monthly report of higher energy prices in 1981 to come true. Before the second week of the new year had ended, electricity rates shot up another 15 percent (for a cumulative 80-percent increase over a 1-year period) and gasoline and oil prices increased more than 20 percent. The gasoline hike was translated into a shocking \$.46-per-gallon increase at the U.S. Commissary pumps. Fortunately, this latest surge in Thai inflation rate was countered by an increase in the Post living quarters allowance: effective (retroactively) 15 December 1980, the LQA annual rate increased by \$1,000 for employees with family and by \$200-700 for those without.

II. OPERATIONS

A. Editorial/Monitorial

1. January entered and departed with a bang as armed clashes occurred on several occasions along the Thai-Lao-Kampuchean borders prompting a flurry of charges, countercharges and protests between other Indochinese governments and Thailand. Placing the situation in at least one perspective, a Thai Government official, when asked by AFP to comment on Lao Government charges that Thai troops had fired on a Laotian vessel plying the Mekong river, replied officially: "Bullshit."

2. Continuing to dominate regional concerns, Kampuchea remained the major discussion topic among area leaders, most notably

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CONFIDENTIAL

- 2 -

MBK-0004

during Japanese Prime Minister Suzuki's tour of ASEAN countries and PRC Premier Zhao Ziyang's visit to Thailand. Zhao publically welcomed for the first time the unification of Kampuchean anti-Vietnamese forces under either Son Sann, leader of the Khmer People's National Liberation Front, or Prince Sihanouk. Zhao also expressed firm support for Thailand in its efforts to resolve the Kampuchean "problem." In an effort to counter ASEAN's diplomatic offensive, the Vietnamese, Lao and Kampuchean foreign ministers met in Ho Chi Minh City and issued counterproposals to the ASEAN call for an international conference on Kampuchea.

3. The popular Bangkok Post, however, provided the most interesting story of the month when it reported, citing informed sources, that KPNLF leader Son Sann would soon replace Khieu Samphan as head of Democratic Kampuchea and that the internationally detested Khmer Rouge leaders Khieu Samphan, Pol Pot and Ieng Sary had agreed to step down and would probably exile themselves to China. Although Western media promptly picked up on the report, monitored VODK and Beijing sources have yet to comment/report on the story.

B. Cruising

1. Newspaper reports and initial statements to the contrary, Thai Government spokesmen finally set the record straight by admitting that to their knowledge the clandestine Voice of the People of Thailand had not resumed its broadcasts. This had been the Bureau position all

[redacted] of VOPT broadcasts. (see December 80 Monthly Report)

2. The Bureau received Headquarter's approval to send a two-man cruising team to Songkla in southern Thailand to conduct a survey of Indonesian regional stations. If survey findings show appreciably better reception, studies will be undertaken to determine feasibility of remoting the signals from Songkla to Bangkok. Associate Editor

[redacted] will conduct the survey
2-6 March.

C. Lateral Services

1. At the urgent request of the Embassy's Political Section, the Bureau supplied a xerox copy of [redacted] version of the speech by SRV Foreign Minister Nguyen Co Thach opening the Indochinese Foreign Ministers Conference in Ho Chi Minh City.

The speech, [redacted] was quickly passed to the Ambassador who was lunching that day with the Thai foreign minister.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

- 3 -

MBK-0004

III. ADMINISTRATION

1. On 16 January, the bureau chief appeared before the Post's Interagency Committee on FSN Position Classification and successfully appealed the downgrading of the bureau's administrative assistant. The committee voted unanimously to forward the appeal to Washington, where the final decision on the position will be determined by the Inter-Agency FSN Classification Appeals Board. Bureau appeals of recommended downgradings for the bureau's assistant engineer, two technicians, cruising monitor, and five boardmen had been forwarded earlier to the appeals board without having to be appealed locally.

2. Following the first successful flights of Vietnamese immigrants to the States via Bangkok under the official Orderly Departure Program (ODP), the bureau was inundated with requests to intervene with ODP officers on behalf of former FBIS Saigon Vietnamese employees and of dependents of current bureau Vietnamese employees. Following a series of contacts and meetings with the ODP chief in the Consulate, files were created and processes begun in the hope of freeing those desiring to leave Vietnam. So far, six "FBIS cases" are in various stages of processing, involving a total of more than 20 Vietnamese.

IV. VISITS

1. On 21 January, the bureau chief visited the ICA compound and received a thorough briefing and tour of ICA operations. The deputy chief, unable to attend the scheduled tour, will visit ICA in February.

2. Accompanied by Station logistics officer [redacted] Deputy Director of the Office of Logistics [redacted] visited the bureau on the 23d for a briefing/tour and to discuss logistics problems.

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3. Prompted by a number of ad hoc requests from several new officers in the Embassy's Political Section, senior editor [redacted] [redacted] invited the officers to the bureau on 30 January where they received a thorough briefing on the bureau's mission and reporting capabilities and a tour of the facility.

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V. COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

In celebration of the 20 January release of the U.S. hostages by Iran, the Ambassador presided over an interdenominational thanksgiving service on 22 January at Holy Redeemer Church near the Embassy. Several bureau staffers and spouses attended. The following day, the Mission celebrated the hostages' release in a more festive way. A joyous 4-hour outdoor party at the Ambassador's residence was heavily attended by Mission employees thanks to the generous grant of

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- 4 -

MBK-0004

administrative leave by the Ambassador. Approximately 40 FBIS employees and spouses were in attendance and enthusiastically participated in the group singing, dancing and partying.



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Chief, Bangkok Bureau, FBIS

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Attachments:

- Engineering
- Production Report
- Production Report by Language, Country & Source
- Embassy Circuit Outage Report

Distribution:

C/Okinawa Bureau

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